

The Christian Influence

Introduction. All things and all beings are influenced to a certain degree by other things or other beings. The moon influences the seas causing the rising and falling of tides. The sun influences plants to turn toward its rays. Have you ever watched a large sunflower as its magnificent head of seeds and blooms turn every slowly as the sun moves across the sky?

Human beings are influenced by other human beings. Therefore, it is not a matter of whether we have influence or not, but rather our concern should be with what kind of influence we are having on others, and what kind of influence are others having on us. Christians are in the world, but they are forbidden to be "of the world" (John 17:14). Being in the world, they should be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16).

At no time should a Christian become so unequally yoked to or allied with the forces of evil that they lose their good influence and morals (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Corinthians 15:33). The Lord gave Himself for us, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). However, it is possible for the child of God to forget "that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:9). In this lesson, we are going to examine our influence.

I. **Examples Of Influence In The Scriptures**

- A. Though he was sorry, Herod "sent and beheaded John" due to the influence of Herodias and her dancing daughter (Matthew 14:6-10).
- B. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-41) and Philip brought Nathaniel to Jesus (John 1:45).
- C. Many of the chief rulers believed on Jesus but refused to confess Him, "because of the Pharisees" (John 12:42).
- D. An imprisoned apostle and his friend converted a jailer and his household by their conduct and their teaching (Acts 16:23-34).
- E. The apostle Peter, even after being miraculously informed of the acceptability of the Gentiles who feared and obeyed God, nevertheless, "withdrew and separated himself" because he feared "them which were of the circumcision" (Galatians 2:11-12). His influence plus the influence of "other Jews" even caused Barnabas to be "carried away with their dissimulation" or their hypocrisy (Galatians 2:13).
- F. A young man, reared in a carpenter's shop and crucified on a rugged cross, changed the course of history by His life. We are told that He left us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). He "abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

II. ***Five Realms Of Influence***

- A. In the domestic realm, compare the influence of a faithful, pure, hard-working, devoted, Bible-following father with that of the indifferent, impure, negligent, unconcerned, seldom-if-ever Bible reading husband and father. Or compare the influence of the virtuous, clean-thinking, industrious, contented, spiritually minded mother with that of the cigarette-smoking, shorts wearing, tantrum throwing, discontented, worldly minded, lazy wife and mother.
- B. In the spiritual realm, compare the influence of the zealous, sacrificial, regular attending, cheerful, concerned, long suffering, truth-seeking member whose affections are "on the things above" with that of the neglectful, tight-fisted, self-seeking, seldom-attending, morose unconcerned, short tempered, truth disregarder who pursues the religion of convenience while rejecting the religion of conviction.
- C. In the social realm, compare the influence of the neighborly, friendly, community-minded, helpful, example-setting person with that of the unneighborly, unfriendly, selfish, unconcerned and impure individual.
- D. In the civil realm, compare the influence of the tax-paying, law abiding, patriotic person who is "subject to the higher powers" with that of the tax-evading, law-breaking, unpatriotic individual who continually speaks evil of the "higher powers."
- E. In the economic realm, compare the influence of the prompt, friendly, cooperative, hardworking, conscientious, company-concerned employee with that of the seldom-on-time, grouchy, uncooperative, company-despising employee.

III. ***Two Illustrations Of Influence***

- A. The salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13).
 - 1. Salt has several characteristics.
 - a) It is white, enhances flavor, preserves, etc.
 - b) Based on the context, it is probably salt's ability to enhance flavor to which Jesus refers in His illustration.
 - (1) Salt has the ability to give flavor to that which is otherwise bland.
 - (2) Job mentioned this ability in Job 6:6.
 - 2. Through the metaphor of "salt" ...
 - a) Jesus depicts the relationship of Christians to the world as one of:
 - (1) Making the world palatable to God, and possibly to others as well.
 - (2) Perhaps making it possible for God to continue to bear with this world and its "distasteful" wickedness.
 - b) The idea that the "righteous few" can make it easier for God to

forbear the wicked is illustrated:

- (1) In Abraham's conversation with God over Sodom (Genesis 18:20-32).
 - (2) In God's dealing with Jerusalem (Jeremiah 5:1). So from God's point of view, Christians give the world what good "flavor" it has.
3. Jesus warns against losing our flavoring ability.
- a) With pure salt ...
 - (1) It actually never loses its flavor.
 - (2) But when mixed with impurities salt can lose its ability to enhance flavor.
 - b) We too might lose our ability to be a "flavoring agent" for the world ...
 - (1) By allowing "impurities" into our lives (1 Corinthians 15:33).
 - (2) Therefore, we need to keep ourselves from sin (Ephesians 5:3-7).
4. If we lose our "flavor"...
- a) How are we going to be seasoned? Impurities prevent us from being useful.
 - b) We will be thrown out.
 - (1) Is Jesus teaching the possibility of losing our salvation?
 - (2) He certainly does elsewhere (Matthew 13:40-43; Revelation 3:15-16).
- B. The light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16).
1. It is God's desire to transmit His glory to the world through His children.
 - a) We are "lights" in a dark world (Philippians 2:14-15).
 - b) Our purpose is to proclaim the praises of God (1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 5:8-9).
 2. We are not "lights" in and of ourselves.
 - a) We are "light" in the Lord (Ephesians 5:8).
 - b) Christ is the "true" or "original" light (John 8:12).
 - c) Citizens of the kingdom are simply "luminaries" reflecting the one true light, just as the moon reflects the sun (2 Corinthians 4:6).
 3. Our twofold responsibility as "the light of the world":
 - a) We must be visible.
 - (1) This is implied by Jesus in His use of a "city" and a "lampstand" as metaphors.
 - (2) Jesus expects His followers to be seen by the world (John 13:35; 17:21).
 - b) We must radiate or give light.
 - (1) This principle conveyed by the idea of the lamp being de-

- signed to shine on a lampstand and not put under a basket.
- (2) This principle explicitly stated in "let your light so shine before men." The purpose of such visible radiation is that men may glorify the Father in heaven (1 Peter 2:11-12; 2 Corinthians 9:12-13).
 - (3) How we conduct ourselves inside and outside the assemblies, is of great importance (Philippians 3:17-19; Romans 16:17-18; Proverbs 6:16-19; 1 Timothy 3:15).

Conclusion. We should also consider our influence among our peers in school and in pleasure, etc. In each of these realms, mentioned in our lesson, our influence can work in one of two ways: for good or for evil. The strong can influence the weak for good or the weak can influence the strong for evil. The fruit we bear affects our influence and our influence affects the fruit we bear. Our life should lend credence and respectability to the truths we believe.

What is your influence, for whom is your influence and for what cause is your influence? What about those closest to you, who know the most about you and stand to be influenced as much or more by you than any other person? Have they become more spiritually minded, less spiritually minded or no apparent change either way?